

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 07356 020604Z

13

ACTION EA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 7356

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, KS

SUBJECT: ROK FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVE: MIDDLE EAST

REF: SEOUL 7015

1. ROK PRESS HAS REPORTED PROMINENTLY FONMIN KIM YONG SHIK'S OCTOBER 30 STATEMENT TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE THAT ROK IS SEEKING IMPROVED TIES WITH ARAB STATES. ACCORDING TO PRESS, MOVE IS INTENDED TO COUNTER PROPAGANDA GAINS MADE BY NORTH KOREA AS RESULT OF ITS ASSISTANCE TO EGYPT IN MIDDLE EAST WAR.

2. MOFA INFORMS US THAT KIM'S STATEMENT WAS NOT AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF A NEW POLICY, BUT A REAFFIRMATION OF PRESIDENT PARK'S JUNE 23 FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVE UNDER WHICH THE ROK WOULD SEEK TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES ALREADY RECOGNIZING NORTH KOREA. IN CASE OF ARAB COUNTRIES, ACTIVE ROK DIPLOMACY BEGAN BEFORE JUNE FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVE (SEOUL A-101).

3. ACCORDING TO MOFA MIDDLE EAST DIVISION CHIEF CHUNG KYO HO, TENTATIVE CONTACTS HAVE RECENTLY BEEN MADE WITH SYRIA, IRAQ AND MAURITANIA, AND OMAN AND KUWAIT HAVE ALL BUT AGREED TO ESTABLISH-
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PAGE 02 SEOUL 07356 020604Z

MENT OF DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR RELATIONS, RESPECTIVELY, WITH THE

ROK. JUST BEFORE THE WAR BEGAN, THE ROK CONSUL GENERAL IN EGYPT HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO PROPOSE OFFICIALLY ESTABLISHMENT OF ROK-EGYPTIAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. THE OUTBREAK OF WAR TEMPORARILY STOPPED THIS DIPLOMATIC MOVEMENT, BUT CHUNG SAYS THAT ROK AMBASSADORS HAVE STANDING INSTRUCTIONS TO MAKE FURTHER APPROACHES TO ARAB GOVERNMENTS ON ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS. IN ADDITION, ROK HOPES TO WORK THROUGH ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS RED CROSS TO INCREASE NON-POLITICAL CONTACTS WITH ARABS.

4. CHUNG SAID THAT ROK HAS BEEN HURT BY THE WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST, PARTICULARLY BY NORTH KOREAN PROPAGANDA DEPICTING ROKG AS SUPPORTER OF ISRAEL. SAID ROK AMBASSADORS TO ARAB LANDS HAVE BEEN PRESSURING MOFA TO AUTHORIZE THEM TO GIVE PUBLIC SUPPORT TO THE ARABS, CLAIMING NOW IS THE TIME FOR ROKG TO GET MOST POLITICAL CAPITAL FROM SUCH EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT. MOFA HAS RESISTED, ACCORDING TO CHUNG, PARTIALLY IN BELIEF THAT THE NORTH KOREANS MIGHT CONTEND CHANGE IN ROK POSITION SHOWS GENERAL ROKG INSINCERITY. INSTEAD, ROK AMBASSADORS HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED TO COUNTER NORTH KOREAN PROPAGANDA CHARGES OF ROK PRO-ISRAELI SENTIMENTS, BY EXPLANATIONS OF ROKG POSITION WHICH THEY HAVE APPARENTLY BEEN DOING WITH LIMITED SUCCESS.

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